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Conflict in voluntary organizations : a field study

Mark Fletcher Pierce

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Mark Fletcher Pierce entitled "Conflict in voluntary organizations : a field study." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Psychology.

Eric Sundstrom, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:
Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Conflict In Voluntary Organizations: A Field Study

A Thesis Presented for the Master of Arts Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Mark F. Pierce

December 2003

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my patient and faithful wife, Cathy Spainhour Pierce, who has supported and encouraged me beyond all expectations. Without her this endeavor would not have been possible.

Abstract

This field study examined the relationships among the perception of conflict, the style of conflict management, and organizational commitment in the executive teams of voluntary organizations. The study was conducted in executive teams of 17 intact voluntary organizations with at least a three-year history. The organizations were non-profit groups of four types; religious organizations (churches), community service organizations, recreational organizations and college sororities. The executive teams, (N = 113), consisting of the boards of directors and the paid administrative staff were surveyed. Conflict awareness and style were measured using the ROCI-I and ROCI-II instruments (Rahim, 1983). Organizational commitment scores were derived from self-report inventories using a seven-point Likert scale. Comparisons of the scores of these voluntary (non-profit) executive teams were made with the published national norms for the ROCI-I and ROCI-II instruments. The results showed that voluntary executive teams reported significantly less intrapersonal, intragroup, and intergroup conflict than the managerial population. The voluntary executive teams were also more likely to use an integrative, obliging, or avoiding conflict management style than the national managerial population from which the norms were derived. The ROCI measures in the study did not significantly correlate with a measure of organizational commitment. Numerous suggestions for further research were made.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction to the Study

Organizations governed by boards of directors and paid staff reporting to those boards are keenly aware of the variability of behavior, cognitions, and attitudes of their boards and other leaders. (Zajac & Westphall, 1996, Johnson, Daily & Ellstrand, 1996). These groups often speculate on the effect of these individual variables on the performance of the organization as a whole (Daily & Schwenk 1996). Stakeholders in the for-profit domain have extensively studied personality and attitudinal predictors of work performance and organizational effectiveness, admittedly with mixed results (Tsui, Egan & O'Reilly, 1992, Schnieder, 1987). It is the purpose of this thesis to begin a series of studies designed to identify important measures of cognitive and affective individual differences in board and/or staff members (executive teams) of voluntary organizations, and to compute appropriate correlations of these measures with several group performance measures.

Population of Interest

In this thesis, *voluntary organizations* are those groups that people join for expressive rather than instrumental reasons. With only a few exceptions, (generally paid staff), members of voluntary organizations do not receive a salary or other tangible benefits from participation. People seek membership in voluntary or non-profit groups for political expression, artistic expression, recreation, religious or existential fulfillment, community service, and social support. Many of these personal needs are not met in the work environment, so it is natural that people will form voluntary organizations to meet

these needs. The power of these organizations is often overlooked. Voluntary organizations are a multi-billion dollar force in the American market place. They consume vast quantities of services and goods, and render valuable services not provided by government and industry. They are often the leaders in raising awareness about important social concerns that are not being considered by more conservative government agencies or for-profit boards. Some government agencies even use non-profit organizations for pilot projects that will later become public programs (Poister, 2002).

The psychological benefit to individuals for participation in these organizations is a factor that has not adequately been studied. Quite often individuals in Western cultures identify more closely with their voluntary organizations than to the business or agency from which they earn their salaries (Jex & Gudanowski, 1992). Life-satisfaction surveys often note that people who are participants in such organizations are more satisfied with their lives (Weaver, 1978). In spite of the importance of voluntary organization to individuals and society at large, little research has addressed their characteristics or effectiveness.

Executive Teams in Voluntary Organizations

Since voluntary organizations are frequently large, diverse, and often loosely structured at the lower levels, this study will focus upon the executive teams of the organization. Executive teams for this study will include the members of the boards of directors (usually volunteers) plus the paid staff members at the executive level who report to the board. Most voluntary organizations are chartered and/or incorporated in a state. Laws of incorporation almost universally require that the organizations elect a board of directors. These individuals can be from within the group, or comprised of

people who share the values and objectives of the group from the community at large. Paid staff members are often a part of the executive team of such organizations. Executive directors, CEO's, CFO's, priests, ministers, rabbis, and program directors are key leaders in such organizations and will be included in the study. In each of the 17 organizations surveyed for this study there was at least one paid executive staff member as a part of the executive team. Maintenance personnel, and secretarial staff who rarely report directly to the boards were not included in the study. This is partly for convenience of collecting data, but even more importantly, the executive teams are likely to be carefully selected from the general membership and community. Such persons are likely to be better representatives of the norms, roles, and values of the group. The variables of interest, especially conflict, would presumably have more effect on the organization at the executive team level. Organizational characteristics and effectiveness is also more likely to be determined at this level.

Much of the current research on executive teams focuses upon the composition of the team. Some of the literature has reported that executive teams composed of outside members are not as productive as those with inside members (Vance, 1978). Other researchers have found curvilinear or positive relationships with outside executive teams and financial performance (Baysinger & Butler, 1985). No attempt was made in this study to test the relationships between inside or outside board composition and performance. Most organizations in this study have inside board members, but no effort was made to distinguish inside or outside board composition. There is also a considerable amount of research that has gone into the discussion of board or CEO dominance (Foust

& Schine, 1990, Fromson, 1990). Once again, no effort was made in this study to determine if the organization was board or CEO driven.

Research on Organizational Performance

One of the difficulties of this study, (and a weakness in the current organizational literature in general), is the identification of appropriate effectiveness criteria for voluntary organizations. What exactly does one measure to determine if a voluntary group is effective? Effectiveness is a global criterion that should be broken down to components when studying any type of group. A major literature review found that more than 30 different criterion variables have been used to measure organizational effectiveness (Campbell & Campbell, 1988). To make the situation even more difficult, organizational effectiveness has been conceptualized in at least four different ways. Goal attainment, system resources, internal processes and strategic constituencies have all been proposed as the proper way to measure effectiveness (Cameron, 1981). These focus upon ends, means, processes, and satisfaction of members (Rahim, 1992). It should be noted that each of the four categories might be further subdivided into a vast array of variables. Choosing effectiveness variables is therefore a difficult research problem, and is worthy of much study as a separate issue.

Since there is rarely a material output that can be counted or measured, voluntary groups must often be evaluated on attitudes, cognitions or behaviors of the members and other stakeholders. The satisfaction of the participants rather than objective measures of output or outcomes (such as market share) provides useful information to researchers. Many of the goals of voluntary organizations are long-term goals that do not lend themselves to immediate objective analysis. For example, programs designed to prevent

youthful criminals from becoming adult criminals cannot be evaluated objectively until the offenders grow into adulthood. Evaluation therefore requires longitudinal objective measures, but also allows for more short-term attitudinal measures of the participants and program output measures. If the stakeholders are satisfied that the organization will eventually produce appropriate and satisfying results the group will continue to exist. In that sense, the organization is effective. The members continue to donate and participate because a personal need is being met. Because this is so, member attitudes and their correlates (turnover, contributions, absenteeism, etc.) have been used to evaluate effectiveness in these and other types of groups (George & Bettenhausen, 1990).

This thesis will use only organizational commitment, one of many possible measures relating to organizational effectiveness. It can be legitimately debated whether or not organization commitment is an effectiveness variable at all. It is certainly possible for the members of an organization to be very committed to remaining in the group even if there is little evidence that there are other tangible outcomes or outputs. By some standards, an organization with high levels of member commitment but no other indicators of performance is not effective. On the other hand, an organization that has several measurable outcomes or outputs, but is losing members and donors at damaging rates could hardly be said to be effective. One must keep in mind why people participate in voluntary organizations in the first place. Shaw and others have pointed out that individuals participate in groups for personal reasons (Shaw, 1983). If people are willing to stay, then obviously some need is being met.

A final concern on this point is whether or not organizational commitment is correlated to some organizational performance and effectiveness variables. It should be

admitted that organizational commitment has not been shown to consistently correlate with job performance variables (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Apparently, contented cows do not give more milk. It should also be noted that some recent studies have pointed out that these weak relationships have been calculated by comparing individual scores on job satisfaction type indicators and individual performance variables. Mathieu and Zajac, (1990), conducted a meta-analysis that showed that organizational commitment had a mean correlation of r = .13 with job performance ratings by supervisors. Ostroff (1992) has noted that when looking at organization levels of analysis that the results have been different. Some individual level variables do predict organization level performance. This is especially true with commitment measures. (Ostroff, 1992). Admittedly, this involves the complex psychometric issue of aggregation. In the opinion of this writer, some researchers have been a bit too quick to dismiss the effects of satisfaction variables on performance measures because they have not looked at the level of analysis problem sufficiently.

It has also been shown that different types of organizational commitment (affective, normative, and continuance) have different relationships with performance variables (Meyer & Allen, 1987). In particular, normative commitment has been correlated to high degrees of participation, donation, and sacrifice (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Normative commitment is exactly the type of organizational commitment that one would expect in a voluntary organization. Continuance commitment should be very low, because most of the executive team members are volunteers. Except for the paid staff, there will be no pensions or insurance benefits as factors in the decision to remain in the group. Organizational commitment has been recognized as the best predictor of turnover

in most organizations, (Becker & Billings, 1993). At the very least, it should be noted that an executive team of a voluntary organization needs people who have insight and personal experience. The complex and nonroutine tasks conducted by such groups require high-quality decisions for any program leading to improved performance. The loss of experienced board members or staff members would bring with it a loss of decision quality that could certainly be expected to negatively impact the performance of the group, if the team members were high performing. "Brain drain" is a problem faced by all types of organizations, and certainly organizational commitment serves as a predictor of this situation.

Research on Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is one of the most widely studied organizational behavior variables of the last few decades. The obvious intuitive appeal of the construct has caused it to be examined by human resource professionals, selection specialists, and management science researchers, among many others. As would be expected with any topic that has attracted so much attention, and that has obvious implications in the work place, many perspectives have been advanced in the literature. There seems to be a developing consensus that the approach of L.W. Porter (1974) has considerable merit. Porter saw at least three underlying factors behind the construct: a strong acceptance of the organizations goals, and a willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, and a desire to remain in the organization (Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian, 1974). These three factors combine to form a construct very similar to, but not identical with work commitment (Morrow, 1993). This is clearly an attitudinal view of the construct. People stay in organizations because they want to stay.

Other researchers have suggested that commitment should also be considered as a value or norm (Meyer & Allen, 1991). They suggested that a person stays with an organization not only because they have found some personal satisfaction, but also because they think it is morally right to stay (Meyer & Allen, 1991). One can see the obvious strength of this approach when considering organizations that people join for religious or political reasons. Often there is considerable guilt attached to leaving the church of one's youth or the party of one's parents. Some members are simply unwilling to face the guilt of leaving, so there is a strong pressure to stay. Meyers and Allen have called this "normative" commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Studies have shown that people who have strong normative commitment are likely to make sacrifices or exert considerable effort for the organization (Meyer, Paunonen, Gellatly, Goffin & Jackson, 1989).

There is a third conceptualization that treats organizational commitment as more instrumental than affective. A member will remain in an organization because they will lose valued rights, privileges, or relationships if they leave. Workers do not casually walk away from a very strong retirement plan or position of high status unless there are guarantees that they can continue to enjoy the benefits of a position elsewhere. This has been called "continuance commitment" by several researchers (Meyer & Allen, 1993). In this view organizational commitment is not just an attitude or a norm, but rather a clear cognitive choice that it is unwise to leave for fear of losing valued rewards. This should not be interpreted as purely financial. Sometimes workers will not leave a for a higher paying job because all their social contacts are contained in the present work place. It can be expensive in many different ways to leave an organization.

It should be noted that there is no need to choose between the three types of organizational commitment mentioned in the literature. It is probably true that all three types can be present at one time in a given person. It is also likely to be true that all three of these forms of commitment vary from month to month, with each one being the dominant factor in remaining with an organization at some point in the personal history of the participant. Organizational commitment can be viewed as multidimensional without doing violence to the construct. All three motives have the same effect; the participant stays with the organization.

Another interesting question concerning organizational commitment is whether or not it is rooted in the personality of the individual or the structure of the group. Stated another way, does organizational commitment arise from the personality of the participant or from the values of the organization that have been internalized by the participant? Was the person born this way, or were they socialized by the organization? Most organizations attempt to socialize (train?) new employees to be committed and loyal. Hiring people is expensive. It is in the best interests of the organization to retain good people. Many organizations teach company loyalty as a norm, often reinforced by slogans and symbols. Often reward systems (golden handcuffs) are tied to company loyalty (Dreher, 1982). Yet, other researchers have pointed out that the commitment of some workers appears to have little to do with work systems and more to do with personal traits (Angle and Lawson, 1993). This line of research indicates that continuance and affective commitment seem to be only modestly related to job performance and that normative commitment is a very stable personal trait that does have stronger correlations to job performance (Angle & Lawson, 1993). This is reminiscent of the "attraction-

selection-attrition" hypothesis (Schnieder, 1987). Did the organization attract and retain loyal people, or did the organization make them loyal people? This becomes an interesting point when considering voluntary organizations, though it is probably beyond the scope of this initial study. If differences can be found between the national managerial norms and the population collected for this study, were the executive teams highly committed people to begin with, or did participation in a voluntary organization create their sense of loyalty?

Organizational Conflict

This study will also measure organizational conflict, a variable affecting both voluntary and for-profit organizations. The operational definition of conflict used in the instruments for these studies is an "interactive state manifested in disagreement, differences, or incompatibility, within or between social entities, that is, individual, group, organization" (Rahim, 1976). Conflict, or lack of conflict, is certainly not an effectiveness variable by itself. That being said, any person who has ever participated in a group of any type is aware that types and levels of conflict are at least anecdotally correlated with group performance. People intuitively suspect, and with good reason, that organizational conflict has something to do with organizational performance. No one who has ever worked in any kind of group would assert that conflict is irrelevant. The issue of "process loss" proposed by Katz and Kahn (1978) points out that groups that are spending time on conflict and resolution will have less energy to spend on production.

Current Research on Organizational Conflict

It is inevitable that some form of conflict occur in every group due to the complexity of organizational life and the individual differences of human beings. No

group is perfectly structured and no individual group member performs with total predictability. There will always be competition for scarce resources within the group and between groups (Tjosvold, 1991). In addition, there are built-in conflicts between the pressure to grow and the pressure to remain stable. The systems approach to understanding organizations indicates that subsets within each organization are naturally in tension with one another (Katz & Kahn, 1978). For example, the boundary spanning systems, such as sales, public relations, research and development, and the procurement subsets of the organization naturally come into conflict with the production, human resource, and management subsets whose focus is mainly internal to the organization. The Quinn model of internal-external orientation explains this source of conflict well, and if true, predicts that conflict will occur in all types of groups, including voluntary organizations (Quinn, O'Neill & St. Clair, 2000). Measures of organizational conflict are evaluated in this thesis using the ROCI-I and ROCI-II organizational conflict inventories. These instruments were chosen because they have a very impressive set of national norms that have been developed in nearly 200 previous studies. These instruments have also been shown to have excellent psychometric properties (Rahim, 1992).

Conflict is a very broad construct and it can be measured at several different levels. Conflict can occur within an individual (intrapersonal) between individuals (interpersonal), within an organization (intragroup), and between organizations (intergroup) (Rahim, 1979). Of these four, interpersonal conflict at a dyadic level is not primarily an organizational variable. It can certainly be a matter of concern in an organization or team, but it is very difficult to assert that the conflict between any two individuals has anything to do with their participation with the larger social unit. Any

conflict that arises within a dyad may have originated in events and processes not related to the organization. The ROCI-I instrument therefore splits interpersonal conflict into within-group and between-group types, which are called Intragroup (IG) and Intergroup (NG), (Rahim, 1983). This is done to keep the focus of the instrument upon the organization or team and not upon a complex dyad that may lead the researcher into fascinating areas that have nothing to do with the life and performance of organizations. (See Figure 1. Note that all tables and figures are located in Appendix D). The operational definitions of the ROCI instruments are as follows:

> Intrapersonal Conflict (IP). This type of conflict, which is also called intraindividual conflict, occurs when an individual is required to perform certain tasks, activities, or roles that do not match his or her expertise, interests, goals and values.
>
> Intragroup Conflict (IG). This refers to conflict among members of a group, or between two or more subgroups within a group. Such a conflict may also occur as a result of disagreements or inconsistencies between some or all the members of a group and its leader(s).
>
> Intergroup Conflict (NG). This type of conflict refers to disagreements or inconsistencies between the members or their representatives or leaders of two or more groups. Conflict between persons in line and staff positions, production and marketing departments and headquarters and field staffs are examples of this type of conflict. (Rahim, 1983).

Recent study of group conflict has focused upon some surprising benefits of task conflict. Studies in industrial work teams have shown that resolved task conflict is correlated with group effectiveness (Amason & Schweiger, 1994; Jehn, 1995). This is not to suggest that task conflict does not cause tension or stress in individuals or teams. Negative affective reactions often occur with task conflict. It is suggested, rather, that resolved task conflict leads to improved decision quality (Baron, 1991). When a team is forced to evaluate all possible options it is likely that better solutions will be found. It is also likely that hidden problems can be uncovered and successfully considered by the

team before a course of action was chosen (Putnam, 1994). This is especially true of groups or teams that are doing non-routine tasks. Groups and teams that have a strong norm for conformity when doing non-routine tasks are prone to develop groupthink (Janis, 1972). In such groups the desire for consensus outweighs the desire for quality of decision. In work groups, academic groups, and lab studies it has been shown that moderate amounts of task conflict will have positive correlations with organizational commitment and longevity of service (tenure), and with organizational membership and financial growth (Jehn, 1995). It has also been shown that very high or very low measures of conflict will be correlated with leader turnover and diminished organizational commitment and performance (Jehn, 1995).

Current Research on Conflict Management Style

The second set of conflict variables identified in this study is the conflict management style of the executive team members of the organization. Conflict management style has been the subject of much organizational research. The ROCI-II (Rahim, 1983) instrument measures this variable and has been used with industrial, managerial, collegiate, and academic populations that will serve as comparison groups. The current research, including the ROCI-II, on styles of managing conflict is derived from the early work of Blake and Mouton (1964) and Thomas (1976). The construct is divided into two dimensions; concern for self, and concern for others. When these two dimensions are examined together on vertical and horizontal axes, they produce the quadrant commonly used by conflict scholars. (See Figure 2). For example, individuals who complete the instrument can score high or low on each dimension of concern. Those who are high in both concern for self and concern for others would prefer an integrating

conflict management style that seeks optimum solutions for both parties. Conversely, those who are low in both dimensions are likely to use an avoidant conflict management style. The dimensions are labeled as follows: integrating (high self/high others), obliging (low self/high others), dominating (high self/low others), and avoiding (low self/low others), (Thomas, 1976, Rahim 1983). Rahim has proposed that the midrange scores on both dimensions are in fact the fifth unique style of managing conflict that he labels "compromising." His taxonomy will be used for this study because, as mentioned before, there are impressive national norms already calculated for this instrument. This will make possible comparisons of the executive teams of voluntary organizations with several other referent groups that have used the same scales.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

It is interesting to speculate whether or not voluntary organizations differ from for-profit organizations in any of these measures. This study will attempt to find empirical evidence of such differences. The commonly used ROCI-I and ROCI-II conflict inventories have been reported over 200 times in journals, but only one of these studies used voluntary organizations as a population (O'Conner, 1999). Only one published article focuses upon the differences in conflict response between managers of profit and non-profit organizations (Schwenk, 1990).

The research question that spurred this study is whether voluntary organizations, and especially the executive teams that lead them, respond to conflict in the same manner as for-profit groups. Asked in another way, can it be demonstrated that groups with very different motives for participation manifest similar conflict management styles and effects? Another related question for further research is whether or not non-profit and for-

profit groups attract different types of personalities. Schnieder (1987) has proposed that groups go through an "attraction-selection-attrition" process by which groups stabilize around a certain set of personality traits that are adaptive for that particular group. Can it be demonstrated that voluntary organizations select different types of workers and decision makers than the for-profit organizations? On the other hand, can it be shown that people who might be conflict prone or conflict avoidant in a for-profit work setting become more integrative while participating in a voluntary organization? A third, and perhaps a more important question, is 'Does it make any difference?' If differences can be found, are they correlated to valid organizational performance measures?

An over-arching assumption (hypothesis) in this study is that the executive teams of voluntary organizations will respond differently from the national managerial norms on these measures. This is so because the motivation for participation in these groups is expressive rather than instrumental. The persons who lead non-profit groups will be more integrative and less dominating. They will also be less likely to be in conflict with their peers. The competition for scarce resources and resulting potential conflict will not affect non-profits in exactly the same manner as in the highly competitive for-profit sector. When trying to improve one's own life and the lives of others, there will be a lessened tendency to view the other members of the organization or team as competitors who must be beaten.

A related question is whether or not paid staff members who have both instrumental and expressive reasons for participation in voluntary organizations will respond more like the for-profit managers from the national sample. Since they are paid, will they be more dominating, or will they respond in the same fashion as the pure

volunteers? Will there be a selection pressure (attraction-selection-attrition) in voluntary groups toward less competitive behaviors even among paid staff members? These questions being posed, the following hypotheses are proposed for this thesis:

Hypotheses

H_1: Executive teams of voluntary organizations will manifest lower levels of intrapersonal, intragroup, and intergroup conflict than the national managerial means on the ROCI-I instruments.

H_2: Executive teams of voluntary organizations will have higher scores for integrative conflict management style, compromising conflict management style, and obliging conflict management style than the national managerial means on the ROCI-II instrument.

H_3: Executive teams of voluntary organizations will have lower scores on dominating conflict management style and avoidant conflict management style than the national managerial means on the ROCI-II instrument.

H_4: Board and staff members who comprise the executive teams of voluntary organizations will have very similar responses on all variables. No significant differences will be manifested.

H_5: Integrative, compromising, and obliging management styles will be positively correlated with organizational commitment scores and negatively correlated with ROCI-I scores.

H_6: Scores for avoidant conflict management style and dominating conflict management style will be negatively correlated with organizational commitment and positively correlated with ROCI-I measures of conflict.

H_7: Scores on intrapersonal conflict will be negatively correlated with organizational commitment and preference for integrative conflict management style.

Chapter 2

Methods

Research Design

A two-phased field study was designed to test for differences of means on the ROCI instruments between the participating voluntary organization executive teams and the published national norms measuring a large managerial population (N = 1219) and a slightly smaller collegiate population (N = 266). In phase one, the executive teams of five organizations (N = 54 board and staff members) were surveyed. They completed a survey measuring organizational commitment and several demographic variables. The purpose of phase one was to test an organizational commitment scale. In phase two the ROCI instruments and the organizational commitment scale were administered to 12 additional organizations.

Procedures

Collection Methods

The organizations for the first part of the study included three churches, a rape counseling center, and an organization providing financial assistance to low income or transient families. The CEO (or highest ranking paid-staff member) of each organization was contacted by phone. The project was explained to them and a packet was mailed or delivered containing the surveys. In two cases the material was passed to the chairperson of the board of directors. Appointments were scheduled with each participating group. The researcher attended a board meeting with each group. Each group expressing an interest in the results was informed that they would have full access to the study upon completion with appropriate measures of confidentiality insured. Demographic

information was collected in the survey for each participant. The rate of response to the individual surveys within the groups who agreed to participate was over 90% (N = 54 executive team members). The response was encouraging enough to proceed with the full study. Five of ten groups were surveyed, and four other groups expressed interest in participating but were not surveyed. One organization refused to participate

In phase two, the executive teams from 12 additional organizations (N = 59 board and staff members) completed the organizational commitment survey and the ROCI-I and ROCI-II instruments. The scores in the professional manual for the ROCI instruments were treated as national standards, and t-tests were computed to test for differences of mean scores between the groups. The executive team managers were compared to both the total sample and to a subset of top-level managers.

The chief executive officer of the 12 additional groups in the second phase was telephoned for a preliminary interview to determine if there was interest in participation in the study. The executive officer was asked to consult with the chairperson of the board of directors of each group. If the executive officer and chairperson agreed to proceed with the study, a letter of explanation and description of the project was mailed to them for further consideration. A follow up call was made to each group to finalize approval and set dates for the study. In phase two, packets were mailed to each executive officer for distribution at a board meeting. The executive teams ranged in size from five to 20 members. The researchers did not attend the meeting, as was the case in phase one. The total number of survey packets mailed was 100.

Participants

There were three community service organizations in phase two. These groups were a legal aid society, an organization that provides housing for disabled adults, and an after-school program for children. The legal aid group is comprised of attorneys and other members of the community. The primary purpose of this organization is to provide legal assistance to people who do not normally have access to attorneys for civil and criminal cases. They operate on a regional level in a Southeastern state of the US. The group providing housing for disabled adults rents and subleases apartments to approximately 20 disabled adults. This organization also provides resident care through full-time resident counselors. They employ approximately five full-time residents. The after-school program provides services for approximately 100 children. Churches and other community donors fund the program. Five religious organizations were surveyed. These were Protestant churches governed by a local board of directors and a paid staff. The churches ranged from 300 to over 2000 members. These churches were chosen carefully so that the executive team was local and autonomous. None of the five executive teams of these churches were required to report to a higher-ranking executive body at the national or international level. They were chosen so that the reporting relationships were similar to the other organizations in phase two. There were two recreational organizations in the study. These organizations provide recreational programs for children and youth. One of the groups provides structured recreational programs for children. The other provided recreational basketball programs for high school and college age students. Two sorority boards from a large state university (N = 16 board members) were surveyed.

Measures

Organizational Commitment

Phase one was conducted to test the feasibility of collecting data from executive teams of intact voluntary organizations, and to develop a scale for measuring organizational commitment. There were two items each for affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment. (See Appendix A). The items were similar to questions used in earlier studies by Jehn (1995) and Amason (1994). The items used in this scale were seven-point anchored response questions from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree).*

Organizational Conflict

The ROCI-I instrument was chosen to measure organizational conflict. This instrument includes 21self-report items (Rahim, 1983). (See Appendix B). Three types of conflict mentioned in the introduction are measured: intergroup (NG), intragroup (IG), and interpersonal (IP).

The ROCI-II instrument was administered to all participants. This instrument uses the two-dimensional description of conflict management style pioneered by Blake and Mouton (1964) and Thomas (1976). It describes management styles as integrative (INT), obliging (OB), dominating (DOM), avoiding (AV) and compromising (COM).

The instrument has been subdivided for administration to three referent groups. Form A describes the conflict management style used by employees when dealing with their immediate supervisor or "boss." Form B measures the other side of the relationship by evalutating the conflict management style used by employers when dealing with subordinates. Form C measures the conflict style used by peers. Only Form C was used in

this study to measure the conflict management style used by members of the executive teams of the voluntary organizations surveyed. Participants were instructed to use only the last page (Form C) and to consider that the references to "our group" meant the members of the executive team. Participants were instructed to consider "the other group" as all other members of the same organization. Each survey instrument was clearly labeled and most were taped shut so that participants would not mistakenly use Form A or Form B. No participants used the wrong form, so all data that was returned was usable. (See Appendix C).

Variables

Demographic Variables

There were several demographic variables measured, including 1. age, 2. tenure with the organization, 3. sex, 4. ethnicity, and 5. level of authority (office) in the organization. Respondents were divided into staff, chair, and board member groups. These measures were used to conduct analyses of variance with the ROCI measures and the organizational commitment scale. There were other variables measured in the survey packet that will be used in later studies.

ROCI-I Organizational Conflict Scale

The ROCI-I instrument for measuring perception of conflict in an organization was used for this study. The three types of conflict are intrapersonal (IP), intragroup (IG), and intergroup (NG). These three types have been demonstrated to be independent dimensions of organizational conflict in prior studies (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979). The intercorrelations of the scales suggest that these are indeed three dimensions of organizational conflict. Only the intercorrelations for the managerial norms (N = 1188)

were used for this study. The collegiate population (N = 635) produced similar results, but it was not used in the analyses. (See Table 1).

The published version has been tested with confirmatory factor analysis with a large group of managers (N = 1219). As with the ROCI-I, factor loadings above .40 were required for inclusion in the published version of the instrument. The five styles of conflict management are measured with five-point anchored response items ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Adding the total point value and dividing by the number of responses for each of the three types creates the scale score. Rahim and colleagues used a process of factor analyses on several sets of items was used to develop this instrument. The scales originally tested 92 items on a college population (N = 635) and later on an even larger management population (N = 1188), (Rahim et al, 1979). Factor loadings for the items ranged from .57 to .63 for IP. In the published professional manual the Intragroup (IG) measure had factor scores from .40 to .64. The Intergroup factor had scores from .46 to .63. The number of items was subsequently reduced to the 21 items used in the published version.

ROCI-II Conflict Management Scale

The ROCI-II instrument has five scales, each of which represent a unique style of managing conflict. The five types are derived from two-dimensions which can be crossed to form a quadrant, and the intermediate scores represent a fifth type. Rahim has called these integrating style (INT), avoiding style (AV), obliging style (OB), dominating style (DOM), and compromising style (COM). This instrument contains 28 items that were developed through a series of factor analyses. Originally there were over 100 items

proposed by Rahim and his colleagues. This was reduced to the 28 in the published version.

Chapter 3

Results

Methods of Analysis

Hypothesis 1 was tested with one-sample t-tests using the professional manual scores as norms. The three types of conflict measured by the ROCI-I were evaluated to see if the sample reported lower mean scores on each type than the national managerial norms. The collegiate sample was compared only to the national collegiate norms. A d-statistic was also computed for each comparison. The d-statistic expresses the effect size in terms of standard deviations overlap for the two distributions (Hurlburt, 2003). An alpha of .05 was used for all analyses.

Hypotheses 2 and 3 were tested with one sample t-tests, and a d-statistic. This analysis was designed to look for differences in conflict management style. It was hypothesized that the executive teams would score higher in integrative, obliging and compromising conflict management style, and lower in avoiding and dominating conflict management style. Once again, only the management norms and the management subset of the sample were used for this analysis.

Hypothesis 4 tested for differences between unpaid board members and paid staff members of the executive teams. It was hypothesized that there responses would show no significant differences. Factorial ANOVAs were used to check the three levels of the "office" variable (staff, chair, board) to see if the groups responded differently. This analysis was conducted to see if the shift from expressive to instrumental motivation (intrinsic to extrinsic) brought with it a change in cognitions or attitudes of the executive team members.

Hypotheses 5 and 6 were tested to see if there were significant positive or negative correlations between any of the eight ROCI scores and the scores on organizational commitment. A correlation matrix was computed for all the relevant variables to find significant correlations. It was hypothesized before the study that scores on the organizational commitment scale would correlate positively with scores on integrative and compromising conflict management style and would correlate negatively with scores on the dominating conflict management style.

Finally, Hypothesis 7 proposed that the demographic variables would produce no significant correlations with any of the ROCI or the OC variables. Pearson correlations were computed to test for the significance, strength, and direction of any potential relationships between variables. To test for any differences of means within the subsets of the sample a median split was computed for the age variable, creating a new variable (younger group/older group). Ethnicity, gender and type of organization were then analyzed using factorial ANOVA to look for any significant differences between any of the groups. The two genders were similarly analyzed, as was the tenure variable. This variable measures the length of service for each participant in the organization they now serve.

Results for the Demographic Variables

The executive team members from the first five groups were typically male (n = 7 females, n = 47 males). The population was middle-aged (M = 43.93 years old, SD = 10.70 years). They had served with the organization in some official capacity for more than a decade (M = 11.63 years, SD = 11.98 years). The age variable was normally distributed while the tenure variable had a positive skew. Some had served with their

organizations for 30 years or more, though the median was much lower (Median = 7 years). The ethnicity variable revealed that most were Caucasian (n = 40).

For the additional 12 groups, one hundred surveys were mailed or delivered to the organizations. From the twelve organizations there were 59 board members who responded. Of those who responded, 43 were male, 13 were female, and three did not answer the demographic questions. Means were computed for the age variable (M = 46.41, SD = 11.64), and the tenure variable (M = 8.95, SD = 9.42).

Results for the Organizational Commitment Scale

The scale reliability for the first version of the scale with all six items was acceptable ($\alpha = .75$). One item was rewritten for use in phase two. The alpha for the final version of the scale with the new item was slightly improved ($\alpha = .77$). This version of the scale had two items for affective commitment, two for normative commitment, and two for continuance commitment. These reliability scores are very similar ($\alpha = .76$) to those obtained by Jehn (1995).

The descriptive statistics for the newly created scale score reveal some interesting characteristics of the population being studied. One would expect participants in voluntary organizations to be high in organizational commitment, especially so for members of the executive team. Obviously a person on the leadership team would normally be expected to have a high degree of interest in the work of the organization. Even with this being the case, the scores for 54 executive team members were very high (M = 6.11, SD = .86). The distribution of scores showed a very pronounced negative skew (skew = -1.44). Most of the scores were piled toward the high end of the distribution (Median = 6.3). For a seven-point anchored scale these scores seem

remarkably high. This result is very interesting and suggests that more research could be done on this topic. The unusually high scores might suggest a social desirability bias in the participants. However, no attempt was made to check for this. In future studies, it would appear wise to develop such checks. These high scores also introduce the problem of range restriction. The predictive ability of the organizational commitment scale is hindered by the fact that most of the scores cluster around the high end. This will be discussed later in the section on correlation between the OC and ROCI scales.

There were no significant correlations between any of the demographic variables and organizational commitment. Age and tenure were obviously correlated, but this is a tautology. Naturally those who had stayed longer in the group were older. Analysis of variance for the gender, ethnicity, and type of organization variables showed no significant effects on organizational commitment.

There was one interesting result in the analysis of the age variable. A median split (Median = 43) was computed for the age variable of 54 executive team members surveyed in phase one. When divided into two groups, (younger and older) there was a difference in the means for organizational commitment. The younger group had lower organization commitment scores ($M = 5.88$, $SD = 1.07$) than the older group ($M = 6.36$, $SD = .46$). With equal variances not being assumed the difference was significant $t(48) = -2.09$, $p = .04$ two-tailed. This finding also suggests further research is needed on the effects of age and tenure on organizational commitment.

Results for the ROCI-I

The internal consistency for this population and this administration of the ROCI-I was evaluated with Cronbach's Alpha. Rahim has reported that internal consistency

measures have been above .70 for all three measures. (See Table 2). The results of this analysis are satisfactory ($\alpha = .71$ for IP, $\alpha = .83$ for IG, $\alpha = .76$ for NG). This is comparable to other studies using the ROCI-I.

A factor analysis was conducted on the population data for this study. Maximum likelihood method of extraction with varimax rotation was used with the number of factors set at three. Factor loadings are summarized in Table 3. The three factors were produced, but not with the same items listed in the professional manual. Most items had factor loading scores over .50, but some of the items did not load on any of the three factors. This is possibly due to the small size or the nature of the sample, but it could indicate that the construct as presented is not appropriate for these groups.

The validity of the construct of organizational conflict has been debated for years, but there is some convergence in the literature. Studies by Thomas (1976) and the Blake and Mouton (1964) studies have all conceptualized conflict in organizations in basically the same way. Most conflict scholars use the taxonomy and the two-dimensional description of conflict management used in the ROCI instruments. The face validity appears adequate, because the number of studies using the instruments seems to indicate confidence in the validity of the construct.

The most serious question about validity has come from the possibility of social desirability bias. This is certainly a potential problem when collecting data from voluntary groups where pressures to appear prosocial are very strong. The norms of the groups in question could possibly moderate the responses of the participating executive team members. In this study, no attempt was made to check if the three study was free from social desirability or response distortion bias. Rahim did measure the collegiate

sample used in the initial factor analysis, and found that there were some marginal but significant negative correlations between social desirability and intragroup conflict scales (Rahim, 83). In future studies in this series on executive teams in voluntary groups, some attempt will be made to develop a bias check. This is potentially a serious problem and it will be addressed in future studies.

ROCI-I Scores

One-sample t-tests were used to compare the voluntary organization sample to the published national sample norms for the ROCI-I instrument, revealing differences for some of the variables. The ROCI-I manual gives an overall score and then subdivides the national sample into subsets, including top, middle, and lower level management. The results for the voluntary executive team population (excluding the college population) are summarized in Table 6.

The results for Hypothesis 1 were mixed. As predicted, the executive team sample reported significantly less perception of intrapersonal conflict ($M = 1.99$, $SD = .53$) than the national managerial sample ($M = 2.26$, $SD = .69$), $t(41) = -3.16$, $p < .00$ two-tailed, $d = .38$. However, when restricting the analysis to the top-level subset of the national sample the differences were not significant and were reversed. The voluntary executive teams reported more intrapersonal conflict ($M = 1.99$, $SD = .53$) than the top-level national managers of the national sample ($M = 1.86$, $SD = .56$), but the difference was not significant, $t(41) = 1.70$, $p = .09$ two-tailed. This finding casts doubt on the first hypothesis of this study because the voluntary executive team is certainly top-level management. (None of the sampled teams were required to report to a higher national or international body.) It could be said that the non-profit group is lower in reported IP

conflict than managers in general, but not different from top-level managers. This result suggests that more study on these two groups is necessary to test for this difference. Rahim reported similar differences between top-level and lower level managers and the national sample as a whole, so this finding is not really new (Rahim, 1983).

As predicted, the intergroup conflict (NG) scores on the ROCI-I instrument for the voluntary executive teams were lower ($M = 1.95$, $SD = .49$) than the national managerial sample ($M = 2.58$, $SD = .67$), $t(41) = -8.21$, $p < .00$, $d = .87$. The intergroup (NG) scores were also significantly lower when the analysis was restricted to the top-level subset of the national managerial norms ($M = 2.30$, $SD = .61$), $t(41) = -4.58$, $p < .00$ two-tailed, $d = .58$.

Also as predicted, the intragroup (IG) scores for the voluntary organization sample ($M = 2.04$, $SD = .59$) were significantly lower than those of the national managerial sample ($M = 2.36$, $SD = .58$) $t(41) = -3.50$, $p = .00$, two-tailed, $d = .55$). Once again, this was the case when the national sample was restricted to the top-level managers ($M = 2.33$, $SD = .52$) $t(41) = -3.17$, $p = .00$, two-tailed, $d = .55$.

Results for the Collegiate Population

A small collegiate population was collected to determine if the differences that have traditionally been found between managerial and collegiate population would be consistent with the population for this study. The collegiate results for the instruments were not included in any analysis of the managerial data, but they did present some interesting comparisons. Most surprisingly, at least to this researcher, the collegiate results based upon two sorority boards from a large state university also reported lower conflict scores on all measures when compared to the national collegiate norms. The IP

conflict score for the voluntary collegiate population (M = 2.17, SD= .45) was significantly lower than the national collegiate norms (M = 2.53, SD = .76), t(16) = -3.29, p < .00, two-tailed, d = .47. The collegiate population for IG conflict (M = 2.16, SD = .34) was significantly lower than the collegiate norms (M = 2.46, SD = .57), t(16) = -3.60, p < .00, two-tailed, d = .52. The population scores for NG conflict (M = 2.14, SD = .39) were lower than the national norms (M = 2.48, SD = .59), t(16) = -3.49, p < .00, two-tailed, d = .57. The surprising result is that the sorority leaders were less conflicted than the national collegiate norms.

The college and managerial participants did have very different means on all the ROCI-I and ROCI-II measures. For example, a collegiate participant scoring at roughly the 50th percentile on IP conflict would be placed at roughly at the 82nd percentile on the managerial norms with the same raw score. The effect size d-statistic for IP conflict on the national norms was very high (d = .85) meaning that the collegiate population is almost a standard deviation above the managerial norm. This demonstrates that research done on college students must not be hastily generalized to adult or managerial populations.

Results for the ROCI-II

The reliability of the ROCI-II has been quite good in earlier studies. Rahim has reported Chronbach's Alpha scores from .72 to .77 (Rahim, 1983). Studies by other researchers have reported similar scores, (See Table 5). In the population for this study, the Chronbach's Alpha was computed for each of the five scales. Some of the scores for the voluntary organization executive teams was similar to those reported in the published manual (α = .78 for INT, α = .69 for OB, α = .80 for AV). The reliability scores were

very unlike those in the published manual and not satisfactory for dominating management style ($\alpha = .14$) or for compromising management style ($\alpha = .58$). This is also likely to be caused by a small or unusual sample, but the scores for the dominating conflict management style suggest that the scale needs to be reexamined.

The discriminant validity of the five scales has been very good and very consistent in the published studies and unpublished theses and dissertations. The five kinds of management and two dimensions of conflict response are clearly different measures in studies up to this point. Rahim has reported that the intercorrelations were rarely above .14 in the confirmatory analysis of 1,219 managers (Rahim, 1983). (See Table 5.) The highest correlation found in the population for this study was between obliging and avoiding ($r = .36$).

A factor analysis was conducted on the population data used in this study to determine if the five factors were consistent with those in the manual. (See Table 8). Maximum likelihood method of extraction with varimax rotation was used with the number of factors set at five. The five factors were produced, but once again, not with the same items as indicated in the professional manual. Factor 5 had only two items with factor loading scores over .40. Several items did not load on any factor. This was checked again by using principle component method of extraction with varimax rotation and the nearly the same results were produced. It is not clear if there is a problem with the instrument or with this sample. This troubling result raises a question about the stability or at least the appropriateness of the construct for the population of executive team members from voluntary organizations.

The question of internal validity is equally serious as it was with the ROCI-I. It is possible that the norms and resulting social pressure of voluntary groups would moderate or mediate the responses of the participants. Paid staff members may be unlikely to report conflict with the boards to whom they report. Once again, a lie scale or social desirability scale could have been used, but was not developed for this study. In spite of this weakness, the scale has been used by over 200 studies, including some designed for organizational intervention (Rahim, 1983)

ROCI-II Scores

Scores were obtained for the conflict management style of the voluntary group executive team members (collegiate sample excluded). The ROCI-II descriptive statistics are summarized in Table 7.

Results for the integrative management style were mixed. It was predicted that voluntary organization leaders would report a more integrative conflict management style than the national managerial sample. This proved to be true when analyzing the entire managerial sample. Voluntary group executive teams reported higher preferences for the integrative style ($M = 4.345$, $SD = .35$) than the national managerial sample ($M = 4.22$, $SD = .41$), $t(41) = 2.29$, $p = .02$, two-tailed, $d = .41$. However, when restricting the analysis to the top-level management subset of the national norms ($M = 4.24$, $SD = .49$), there was no significant difference between the two groups, $t(41) = 1.91$, $p = .06$, two-tailed, $d = .20$. One could argue that a much larger sample size would possibly show a significant difference in these two groups because the significance level is very close to .05. Top-level managers of both voluntary and for-profit groups seemed to indicate a very high preference for the integrative (high self/high others) style of management. Rahim

has reported that there are significant differences within his national sample when comparing levels of organizational authority. Top-level managers have been shown to be more integrative than lower level managers (Rahim, 1983). In this study, no attempt was made to subdivide the non-profit population into these levels. All participants are assumed to be top-level managers.

Consistent with the predictions, scores of the voluntary organization population on obliging conflict management style (low self/high others) was different from the national managerial norms. The voluntary executive team scores ($M = 3.58$, $SD = .49$) were higher than the scores for the managerial norms ($M = 3.37$, $SD = .54$), $t(41) = 2.77$, $p < .00$, two-tailed, $d = .38$. The difference was even more pronounced when making a comparison to the top-level management subset of the norms ($M = 3.22$, $SD = .49$, $t(41) = 4.79$, $p < .00$, two-tailed, $d = .72$. Voluntary executive teams and their paid staff members are more likely to use an obliging conflict management style than other managers in the national norms.

Although a clear difference emerged when comparisons were made for the dominating conflict management style (high self/low others), the instability of the factor structure made it impossible to confirm the hypotheses. The voluntary executive team members reported lower preferences for this style ($M = 2.64$, $SD = .64$) than the managerial sample ($M = 3.13$, $SD = .68$). The difference was significant, $t(42) = -4.94$, $p < .00$, two-tailed, $d = .71$. When restricting the comparison to top-level managers from the national sample ($M = 3.21$, $SD = .70$) the difference becomes even more pronounced, $t(42) = -5.75$, $p < .00$, two-tailed, $d = .81$. However, it is impossible to establish from this study that the voluntary executive leaders were different due to the poor reliability

($\alpha = .14$), and the failure to support the factor structure within this population.

The results were mixed concerning the hypothesis about the avoiding conflict management style (low self/low others). The prediction was that the voluntary group executive teams would score lower than the managerial norms. The executive team members reported slightly higher scores ($M = 2.99$, $SD = .72$) than the national managers ($M = 2.81$, $SD = .73$). The difference was not significant, $t(42) = 1.80$, $p = .078$, two-tailed, $d = .25$. The difference became more pronounced when restricting the national managerial sample to top-level managers. The top-level managers had the lowest mean of all the subsets from the national sample ($M = 2.67$, $SD = .75$). When compared to the voluntary executive teams the difference was significant, $t(42) = 2.98$, $P < .00$, two-tailed, $d = .44$. It appears from these results that executive teams from voluntary organizations are more likely to avoid conflict than managers from other types of organizations, especially the top-level managers.

This study proposed that voluntary groups would be more compromising (intermediate self/intermediate others) when dealing with conflict. The executive team sample did score higher ($M = 3.73$, $SD = .50$) than the national managerial sample ($M = 3.48$, $SD = .67$). The difference was significant, $t(42) = 3.22$, $p < .00$, two-tailed, $d = .39$. When using the top-level organization norms from the ROCI-manual, the difference was also significant. The top-level managers scored lower on compromising ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .68$) than the executive teams of voluntary organizations. The difference was significant, $t(42) = 3.87$, $p < .00$, two-tailed, $d = .44$. However, poor reliability scores ($r = .58$) make it impossible to confirm or deny the hypotheses about these constructs.

Within-Group Results

When contrasting the subsets within the population for this study there were two significant differences that are contrary to expectations, however, the aforementioned reliability problems make it impossible to confirm or deny the hypotheses. Paid staff members reported higher preferences for the compromising conflict management style ($M = 3.97$, $SD = .48$) than the non-paid board members ($M = 3.61$, $SD = .44$), $F(2,40) = 3.53$, $p = .04$. For this test, equality of variance was assumed, Levene$(2, 40) = 1.56$, $p = .22$. It was assumed that there would be no differences in board and staff members (paid and non-paid). This result reintroduces the question about intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and work attitudes raised in the introduction. Does paying someone change attitudes about the work? Since this construct had very poor reliability scores, it would be necessary to test this again before the question can be answered.

The sample also produced one other unexpected difference. A median split (Median = 47) was computed for the age variable, dividing the population in the additional 12 organization into an older group and a younger group. The older group reported significantly higher scores on organizational commitment ($M = 6.01$, $SD = .75$) than the younger group ($M = 5.01$, $SD = 1.24$), $F(2,40) = 9.66$, $p < .00$. This result was unexpected and suggests that more research should be done on the effects of age on work attitudes in voluntary groups and other types of organizations. Analysis of the first five organizations produced the same result, so this finding appears to be consistent. Older members of the team are generally more committed to the organization.

There were no other significant effects from demographic variables or other within-group variables for this study. This is consistent with the hypotheses. Gender,

ethnicity, and tenure produced no significant differences of means for any of the ROCI variables or the organizational commitment scale. It should be admitted that the number of females (n = 7) in this sample is very small, and that if the sample were larger it is possible that gender differences could appear. However, this study has not find such a difference.

Correlations of ROCI and Other Variables

One of the main purposes of this study was to test for relationships between ROCI-I perception of conflict measures and ROCI-II conflict management style measures. Another of the main purposes of this study was to determine of there were any relationships between ROCI conflict variables and organizational commitment scores. Another purpose of this study is to look for relationships between the other variables and the demographic information collected for the study. The professional manual includes some of the earlier correlations for these instruments from other studies. The population collected in this study was compared to the sample collected by Rahim and other researchers. The correlations are summarized in Table 9.

The results failed to confirm the hypotheses concerning relationships between ROCI measures and organizational commitment. No significant relationships were found. Only age correlated with organizational commitment ($r = .39$, $p = .01$). Some earlier studies have found that moderate levels of conflict correlate positively with organizational commitment and even organizational performance (Jehn, et al, 1995). Earlier work by Rahim and his colleagues has generally found that measures of ROCI-I conflict types correlate negatively with organizational effectiveness measures such as productivity, adaptability and flexibility (Rahim, 1983). These measures have also been

found to correlate negatively with job satisfaction measures, (Rahim, 1983). So, it appears that there is evidence on both sides of this issue. This study did produce negative correlations for ROCI-I variables and organizational commitment, but the significance levels were all above .05. It could be assumed that a much larger sample size is needed to answer the questions about relationships between the variables in a satisfactory manner. This result is also likely due to the severely restricted range of scores on the organizational commitment scale. In the first five organizations the OC score was very high, as has been noted already ($M = 6.11$, $SD = .86$). Very similar results were found for the additional 12 organizations. Some of the correlations were tantalizingly close ($p = .051$), but no conclusions can be drawn from this study until a broader range of scores can be examined.

ROCI–I and ROCI-II Correlations

Relationships between the ROCI-I and ROCI-II variables were much more informative. One of the most interesting relationships of the study is that intrapersonal conflict (IP) is negatively correlated with an integrative conflict management style ($r = -.46$). The professional manual does not include an analysis of the relationships between measures for the two instruments, so this relationship has not been described and deserves more study. The correlation in this study was highly significant ($r = -.46$, $p < .00$), and it reinforces the need for more research on the issue. To make the case even stronger, intrapersonal (IP) conflict is also highly correlated to reported intragroup (IG) conflict, ($r = .47$, $p < .00$). It makes sense that a person who is conflicted about their role and position in the organization would be less integrating in conflict management style and would perceive and report more IG conflict. This would explain what all

organizational participants have known anecdotally. A conflicted team member usually brings conflict to the group.

Another highly significant relationship between ROCI variables is that Intergroup (NG) conflict and intragroup (IG) conflict are strongly related ($r = .56$, $p < .00$). This relationship suggests that if there is conflict on the management team, there is likely to be perceived conflict between the executives and the other group members. This relationship is intuitively appealing and it should be examined in more depth.

In this sample, obliging and avoiding conflict management style were also positively correlated, ($r = .45$, $p < .00$). Both of these management styles describe a person who is low in concern for self. The relationship described here between obliging (low self/high others) and avoiding (low self/low others) may be capturing this low concern for self by the participant. It is possible and likely that some voluntary groups appoint people who have little personal interest and little at stake in the output and outcomes of the group. This would be especially true when groups appoint board members who are not active participants in the group but rather are quasi-interested members of the community. Such persons would not likely engage in conflict because they have little at stake. They are likely to avoid conflict or simply acquiesce to the wishes of more involved members.

The predictions concerning organizational commitment have generally not been supported by this study. There were no significant correlations between conflict management style and organizational commitment, and a modest correlation ($r = .39$) between age and organizational commitment, but as we have already noted, there was a significant difference when splitting the sample into older and younger groups. The

insignificant correlation shown between age and an integrative style weaken the first finding somewhat. The demographic variables revealed very little of interest. It makes sense that older members of executive teams are high in organizational commitment, but this is circular. It is reminiscent of the relationship between tenure and age. Gender and ethnicity did not produce any interesting results, but as it has already been admitted, there were very few females or minority members on the executive teams. This calls for a larger and more inclusive study before any description can be made.

Chapter 4

Discussion

Conclusions

Ostroff (1992) and others have reported that the relationship between individual satisfaction measures and individual job performance is weak. They have also noted that the relationship between individual levels of these measures and group performance is more interesting (Ostroff, 1992). If the methods and statistics can be developed to properly identify and aggregate the appropriate individual measures, then there can be a better connection between them and group level measures of analysis. The studies begun here will at least attempt to deal with this difficult problem.

Part of this study was basically descriptive and exploratory. It was done to test the feasibility of collecting data from intact organizations and also to establish an organizational commitment scale for use in later studies. As every researcher knows, field research in intact organizations is expensive, difficult and time consuming. Intact organizations that are trying to accomplish their specific mission often have little time for intrusive researchers. Such groups also tend to be very protective of hard-won images that are necessary for fund raising and public relations purposes. This would be especially true when broaching the sensitive subject of organizational conflict. Since there are few extrinsic motivators for participation, such as extra credit, these intact groups are notoriously difficult to survey. Convincing them to discuss the stress-inducing subject of conflict with strangers did prove to be difficult. However, the response was strong enough to proceed with the study. Some of the executive team members expressed strong

interest in the project and requested a report when the results were available. Many team members understood the value of an analysis of these variables.

The strength of this study is that the sample, though small, is real. The ecological validity issue raised by Neisser (1982) is solved in this study because these executive teams are in their natural environment. It is often better to wrestle with the possible contaminants of the field than the sterility of the lab.

The study is a first attempt to identify and quantify some of the complex variables that could have an effect on the performance of these groups. The result are mixed. The overarching question of whether or not these groups are different from for-profit groups has been at least partly answered. The results suggest that executive teams of voluntary organizations do report different perceptions of conflict and employ different styles of conflict management than the reported results from studies of other groups. In particular, the leaders of voluntary organizations either are by nature, selection or training, more integrative than managers of other types of organizations. It appears that voluntary leaders do not perceive other leaders, other groups, and units within their organizations as competitors who must be beaten. The executive team members seem to be likely to seek win/win solutions to situations of conflict and more likely to avoid conflict when such solutions are not possible. It was not the purpose of this study to explain why this difference appears. Other studies must take up the question of nature and nurture. Do executive teams of voluntary organizations become more integrative and less competitive because of the nature of the organization, or do such organizations naturally select and retain individuals who are less dominating and more integrative? Are selection and socialization congruent, as suggested by Schneider, Smith, Taylor and Fleenor (1998).

The 12 groups of executives that participated in this study also reported lower levels of IP, IG, and NG conflict than either the national managerial sample or the collegiate sample. The question of social desirability bias becomes very relevant to this point. This becomes particularly interesting when considering the fact that persons who reported less intrapersonal (IP) conflict also reported less intergroup and intragroup conflict. Did these people actually experience less conflict in voluntary groups, or did they report less conflict? The issue of conflict norms was not addressed in this study, but it can be assumed that voluntary groups might have such norms, and that they would moderate intergroup (NG) and intragroup (IG) conflict. This would be especially true of religious organizations where such norms would be strongly reinforced by values and procedures. The issue of impression management should also be mentioned at this point. Since these voluntary groups are donor-driven, they are very sensitive to public relations issues. They have demonstrated an understandable reluctance to discuss hot-button issues like conflict with strangers or intrusive researchers. Such groups will not risk giving out information that could negatively impact fund raising or member morale. There is a real possibility that the members of the teams were coached or that they collaborated on the survey. Since the researchers were not present when the survey was administered in phase two, there is a possibility of this type of contamination of the data. This makes research difficult but not impossible in such groups.

One of the results of this study moderates confidence in the findings about lower conflict scores, especially intrapersonal conflict. When only top-level managers of the ROCI norms are used for comparison, the voluntary group leaders actually reported more intrapersonal conflict than the national norms, though the difference was not significant

in this population. The ROCI professional manual indicates that top-level managers reported the lowest levels of IP conflict of any of the groups who have taken the ROCI instruments (M = 1.86, SD = .5619). It is intuitively appealing that top-level managers would experience low levels of IP conflict. They could be expected to have higher levels of job satisfaction. They also could be expected to enjoy tangible and intangible perks that are not available to lower-ranking members. The voluntary organization executive team members chosen for this study were top-level mangers. This means that they are not required to report to any other boards or officers. These top-level leaders theoretically enjoy the same responsibilities and authority as those sampled for the national norms. Yet, they reported more IP conflict than their cohorts in the for-profit groups. This result needs further investigation. It raises questions about job satisfaction, reward structure, group cohesion, and organizational commitment among many others. This study was not designed to address comparisons of non-profit and for-profit groups for these measures, but it does raise interesting points for future studies. Are voluntary and non-profit leaders more conflicted about their roles than their cohorts in the for-profit domain?

The measure of intrapersonal conflict is interesting for a different reason. It was established in the study that persons who scored high on intrapersonal conflict were more likely to experience or report NG and IG conflict. They were also less likely to use an integrative conflict management style. This point is useful for leaders of such teams. Interventions can be planned to address the issue of intrapersonal conflict. Team members who are badly conflicted over their role in the organization must be helped to resolve these issues before the personal crisis affects other members of the group. Though a clear relationship between intrapersonal conflict and organizational commitment was

not proved in this study, we should not assume that the relationship does not exist or that it does not matter. If a team member can be made to feel useful and comfortable it is likely they will remain in the group. "Brain-drain" is a serious problem that can be managed at a personal level if leaders and executive officers are aware that a member of the team is struggling. Proactive and well-intentioned leaders should be willing to make the participation of each team member meaningful, or they should plan for orderly replacement and transitions.

This study has failed to establish a strong relationship between the conflict variables and a measure of performance, organizational commitment. It is probably due to range restriction or social desirability bias. This does not mean that the relationship does not exist. The relatively small size of the sample and the complexity of the organizations require that more research be done to verify this result with studies specific to the question.

The comparison of the executive teams of voluntary organizations to leadership teams of other types of organizations is useful for purposes of "benchmarking." The national norms published in the ROCI manuals have provided a very useful tool. Executive team members of voluntary organizations are constantly seeking appropriate ways to measure the performance, attitudes and trends of their groups. This study has established that perception of conflict and a preference for a management style can be measured, and that there are suitable norms for comparison purposes. It would be helpful for voluntary organizations to establish their own set of norms. The process is somewhat costly and time consuming, but it is not impossible. Leaders of voluntary organizations and umbrella organizations could benefit from a very large sample of executive team

members and other stakeholders on these and other measures. Leaders of such groups often deal with nebulous perceptions of donors and other stakeholders. It would be far better to have a large national database dedicated to performance and attitudinal measures of voluntary groups. Such norms already exist in several forms for use by for-profit organizations. This study is a small first step toward establishing such a database.

Another point that is interesting from a research perspective is that the published norms for managerial and collegiate samples differ greatly. This study confirmed the differences. Some measures showed that the national managerial and collegiate distribution of scores were almost one standard deviation apart. This calls into question some attitudinal research based on college students and then generalized to the larger population. If a collegiate sample were collected and used for this study, almost all the results would have been different. The national collegiate sample and the small collegiate sample for this study showed that intrapersonal conflict in particular was very high when compared to the managerial sample. The frustration of collecting data in the field with working adults just might be worth the extra effort.

Limitations

The limitations of this study have been noted repeatedly throughout the study. The most serious of these is that the factor structure on the ROCI instruments for the national managerial sample and the population of voluntary executive team members is very different. Even when forcing the data into three factors (ROCI-I) and five factors (ROCI-II) the obtained results do not confirm the structure of the factors from the manual or earlier studies. While it is possible to produce the published factors, the items do not load on the same factors and some items cross-load, or do not load at all when using this

population. This is quite troubling. It leads to several possible explanations. Either this population and/or administration is aberrant, or the constructs are not stable, or the constructs do not fit the population. Are voluntary executive teams so different from for-profit executive teams that even the types of conflict perception and management must be adjusted to fit the non-profit world? If they are different, then what is the origin and nature of these differences? Should new measures be developed specific to the voluntary organizations?

Another limitation is that this sample, though real, is very small. In order to create a study with sufficient statistical power to detect differences that may exist, many more cases are needed. Some of the differences that were not significant in this study may well be significant with the addition of several more participants. The expense of using a published instrument and the time allowed for a study of this type prohibited a larger sample. However, it is the intention of this researcher that this study is only the first of many. The national databases for voluntary groups must be created and expanded.

Another limitation of this study is that it deals with only the executive teams of voluntary organizations. If the general membership were surveyed, the results may be strikingly different. No attempt is made in this thesis, and no attempt should be made, to generalize these results to the other participants of voluntary organizations. It was clearly established in the beginning that this was a study of leadership or even more specifically, top-level leadership in these groups. The participating members of these organizations would probably respond to the same instruments differently. This has been the case with the ROCI instruments and most other types of intact group research. There are usually

significant differences between functional areas, organization level, level of education, and other subsets of the organization being studied.

It has also been mentioned that the sample was overwhelmingly male and located in one region of the United States. This was not done by research design, but for ease of data collection in the studies. This does raise the possibility that what has been discovered in the study could be a regional difference. Perhaps voluntary organizations from other regions of the United States would respond differently to these instruments. It is essential that other samples be collected from international voluntary groups, and from groups where minorities are better represented. It is troubling to this researcher that women do not appear to be gaining top-level positions in these organizations. This also calls for further research to identify and describe the conditions that allow this to occur.

Nevertheless, this study represents a beginning point for further research that will lead to a better understanding of these groups, how they function and how they select members and leaders. The studies will also attempt to establish research methods that may lead to improved analysis of these groups, including predictors of organizational performance and effectiveness. This improved analysis may lead to improved interventions by consultants and managers so that voluntary organizations may reach their fullest potential. Their contribution to the quality of life in our society is too large and too important to ignore. Any effort to improve the performance of these groups will improve the lives of millions of individuals.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Organizational Commitment Scale

Organizational Commitment ($\alpha = .75$).

1. I want to remain in this group for a long time.
2. I would feel guilty if I left this organization.
3. Being a part of this organization meets a personal need for me.
4. It would not change my life significantly to leave this organization.
5. I think I should continue working with this group.
6. I am emotionally attached to this organization.

Demographic Questions

1. What is your age?
2. Male____Female____.
3. How long have you been a part of this organization?
4. What is your ethnic origin?

African-American___Asian___Caucasian___Hispanic___Native American___Other___.

5. What offices do you now hold in this organization?

Appendix B

ROCI-I Instrument

Intrapersonal Conflict ($\alpha = .71$)

3. I like the tasks I perform relative to the other tasks that are performed in my organization.
6. There is "good" match between my needs and the needs of the organization.
7. If I accept a job in another company, I would like to do the tasks that I am doing now.
11. My job is challenging.
15. There is good match between the tasks that I perform and my initial task preferences when I took this job.
17. I engage in work that is of little interest to me.
21. My skills are fully utilized on the job.

Intragroup Conflict ($\alpha = .83$)

2. There is harmony within my group.
4. In our group, we do lots of bickering over who should do what job.
9. There is lack of mutual assistance between my group and the other group.
10. There is difference of opinion among the members of my group.
12. There is dissension in my group.
14. The members of my group are supportive of each others ideas.
20. There is "we" feeling among the members of my group.

Intergroup Conflict ($\alpha = .76$)

1. There is agreement between my group* and the other group**.
5. The other group withholds information necessary for the attainment of our group tasks.
8. The relationship between my group and the other group is harmonious in attaining the overall organizational goals.
13. There is cooperation between my group and the other group
16. There are clashes between subgroups within my group.
18. There is friendliness among the members of my group.
19. The other group creates problems for my group.

* For this administration of the survey "my group" refers to the executive team members.
** For this administration of the survey "the other group" refers to all other members of the organization.

Appendix C

Form C ROCI-II Instrument

Integrating Style (α = .78)

1. I try to investigate an issue with my peers to find a solution acceptable to us.
4. I try to integrate my ideas with those of my peers to come up with a decision jointly.
5. I try to work with my peers for a proper understanding of a problem.
12. I exchange accurate information with my peers to solve a problem together.
22. I try to bring all our concerns out in the open so that the issues can be resolved in the best possible way.
23. I collaborate with my peers to come up with decisions acceptable to us.
28. I try to work with my peers to find solutions to a problem which satisfy our expectations.

Obliging Style (α = .69)

2. I generally try to satisfy the needs of my peers.
10. I usually accommodate the wishes of my peers.
11. I give in to the wishes of my peers.
13. I usually allow concession to my peers.
19. I often go along with the suggestions of my peers.
24. I try to satisfy the expectations of my peers.

Avoiding Style (α = .80)

3. I attempt to avoid being "put on the spot" and try to keep my conflict with my peers to myself.
6. I usually avoid open discussions of my differences with my peers.
16. I try to stay away from disagreement with my peers.
17. I avoid an encounter with my peers.
26. I try to keep my disagreement with my peers to myself in order to avoid hard feelings.
27. I try to avoid unpleasant exchanges with my peers.

Dominating Style (α = .14)
8. I use my influence to get my ideas accepted.
9. I use my authority to make a decision in my favor.
18. I use my expertise to make a decision in my favor.
21. I am generally firm in pursuing my side of the issue.
25. I sometimes use my power to win a competitive situation.

Compromising Style (α = .58)

7. I try to find a middle course to resolve an impasse.
14. I usually propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks.
15. I negotiate with my peers so that a compromise can be reached.
20. I use "give and take" so that a compromise can be made.

Appendix D

Tables

Table 1

Intercorrelations of Scales of ROCI-I for the Managerial Norms

(N = 1188)

Conflict Scales	IP	IG	NG
Intrapersonal (IP)		.29	.35
Intragroup (IG)			.40
Intergroup (NG)			

Table 2

Test-Retest Correlations for the ROCI-I.

Internal Consistency Reliability Coefficients, n = 1188			
Scales	Test-Retest	Cronbach Alpha	Spearman-Brown
Intrapersonal	.85	.82	.81
Intragroup	.74	.81	.82
Intergroup	.77	.79	.83
Mean	.79	.81	.82

Table 3

Factor Loadings for the ROCI-I Items

Item	Factor 1 (IG)	Factor 2 (NG)	Factor 3 (IP)
ROCI-I, 9	.79		
ROCI-I, 18	.75		
ROCI-I, 12	.67		
ROCI-I, 4	.59		
ROCI-I, 5	.53		
ROCI-I, 10	.51		
ROCI-I, 16	.43		
ROCI-I 1		.86	
ROCI-I, 13		.84	
ROCI-I, 8		.79	
ROCI-I, 15			.77
ROCI-I, 3			.49
ROCI-I, 6			.48
ROCI-I, 17			.44

Note: ROCI-I items 11 and 19 fail to load on any factor.

Note: ROCI-I items 12, 14, 17, 20, and 21 load on more than one factor.

Table 4

Test-Retest Correlations and Internal Consistency Reliability of the ROCI-II

Scales	Test-Retest	Cronbach's Alpha	Spearman-Brown
Integrating	.83	.77	.73
Obliging	.81	.72	.71
Dominating	.76	.71	.71
Avoiding	.79	.75	.71
Compromising	.60	.72	.67
Mean	.76	.74	.71

Table 5

Intercorrelations of Scales of the ROCI-II Professional Manual, n = 1219

Scales	IN	OB	DO	AV	CO
Integrating		.14	-.04	-.08	.23
Obliging			.11	.33	.26
Dominating				.01	.07
Avoiding					.16
Compromising					

Table 6

Results for the Voluntary Executive Teams on the ROCI-I

Scale	N	Mean	SD
Intrapersonal	51	1.99	.53
Intragroup	51	2.04	.59
Intergroup	51	1.95	.49

Table 7

Results for the Voluntary Executive Teams on the ROCI-II

Scale	N	Mean	SD
Integrative	59	4.34	.34
Obliging	59	3.57	.49
Dominating	59	2.64	.65
Avoiding	59	2.99	.72
Compromising	59	3.72	.50

Table 8

Factor Loadings for the ROCI-II Items

Item	Factor 1 INT	Factor 2 AV	Factor 3 OB	Factor 4 Dom	Factor 5 Comp
ROCI-II, 28	.87				
ROCI-II, 23	.72				
ROCI-II, 22	.66				
ROCI-II, 4	.57				
ROCI-II, 12	.55				
ROCI-II, 24	.49				
ROCI-II, 1	.45				
ROCI-II, 17		.76			
ROCI-II, 16		.65			
ROCI-II, 11		.62			
ROCI-II, 6		.54			
ROCI-II, 7		.51			
ROCI-II, 3		.48			
ROCI-II, 27		.41			
ROCI-II, 19			.83		
ROCI-II, 20			.62		
ROCI-II, 14			.47		
ROCI-II, 8				.97	
ROCI-II, 25					.95
ROCI-II, 5					.51

Note: ROCI-II items 2, 9, 10, 15, 18 and 21 do not load on any factor.

Note: ROCI-II items 13 and 26 load on more than one factor.

Table 9

Correlation Matrix for ROCI-I, ROCI-II, OrgCom Scale and Age Variables

Pearson Product-Moment correlations, two-tailed. Significance = .05

	ROCI-I			ROCI-II					OrgCom	Age
Variable	IP	IG	NG	IN	OB	DO	AV	CO	OrgC	Age
IP		.47**	.28	-.45**	-.12	-.26	-.23	.01	-.35	-.31
IG			.56**	-.29	-.04	-.12	-.06	.03	-.30	-.18
NG				-.20	.02	-.19	.06	.05	-.27	.00
IN					.27	.04	.18	-.05	.22	.29
OB						.14	.46**	.24	.12	-.03
DO							-.20	.17	.14	.14
AV								.17	.27	.22
CO									.14	.12
OrgCom										.39*
Age										

**Significant at p<.01. *Significant at p<.05.

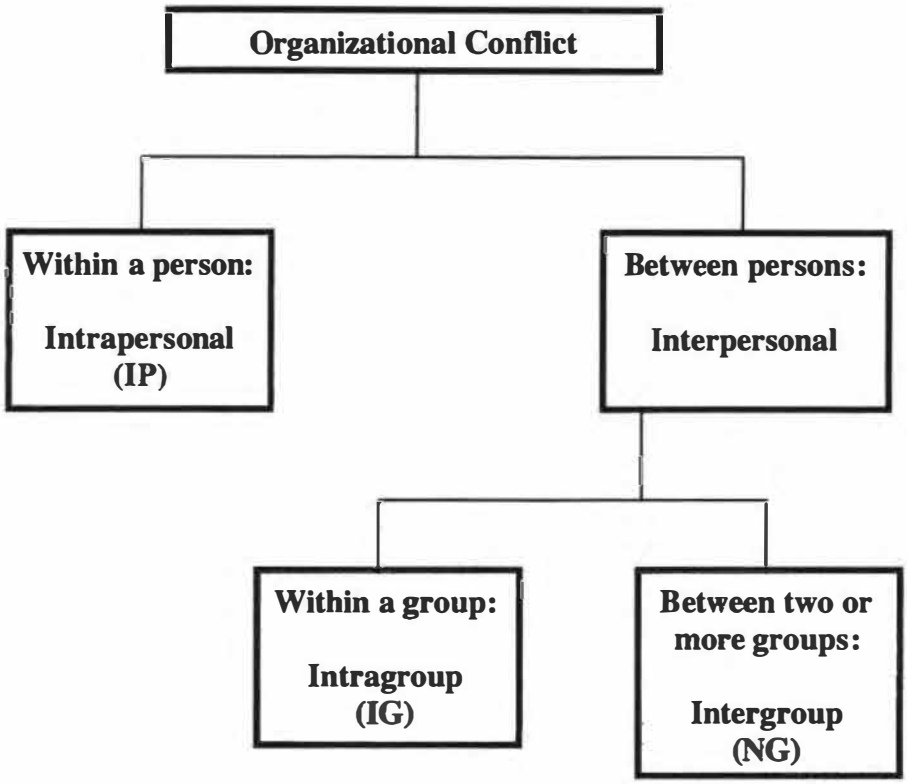

Figure 1. Organizational conflict based on the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventories Professional Manual. Rahim, M.A. (1983). *Rahim Organizational Conflict Invwentories Experimental Edition Professional Manual.* Palo Alto, Consulting Psychologist Press.

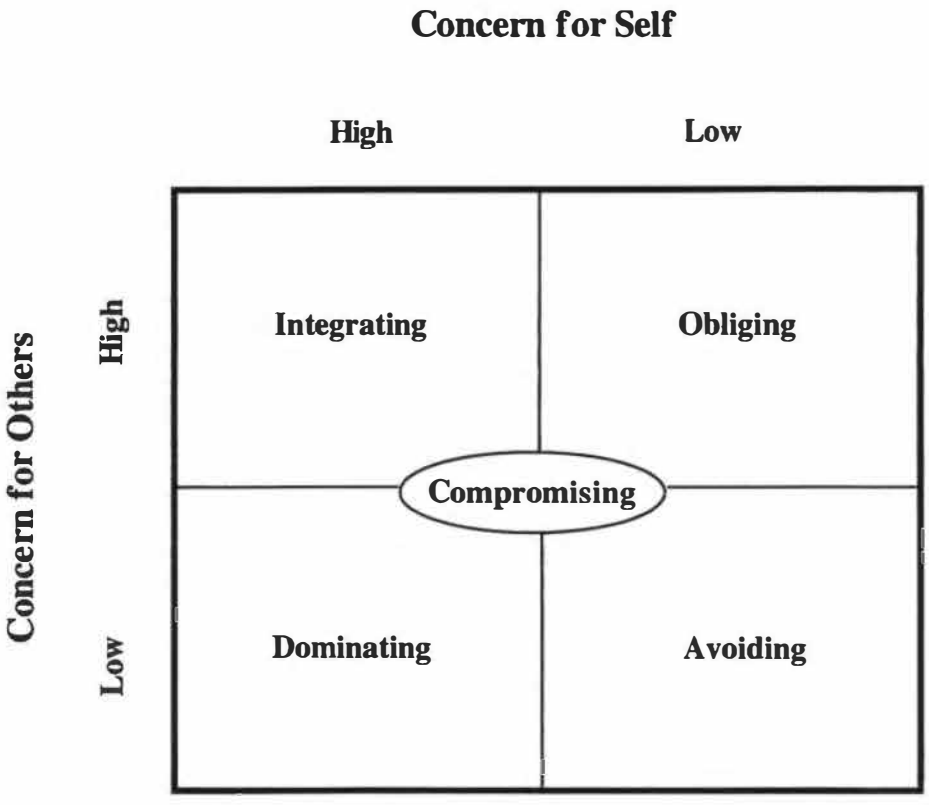

Figure 2. A two-dimensional model of conflict management styles based upon the professional manuyal for the ROCI instruments. Rahim, M.A., (1983). *Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventories Experimental Edition Professional Manual.* Palo Alto, CA, Consulting Psychologist Press.

Vita

Mark Fletcher Pierce was born in Elizabethton, TN on July 20, 1951. He was raised in Carter County, TN where he attended the Elizabethton City Schools. He graduated from Elizabethton High School in 1969. From there, he attended Atlanta Christian College in East Point, GA, receiving the Bachelor of Arts degree in religious studies in 1973. He then attended the Emmanuel School of Religion in Johnson City, TN from 1973 until 1978 where he received the Master of Divinity degree with a concentration in ministry. Mark was ordained as a minister in the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ in 1973.

Mark has been married to Cathy Spainhour Pierce since August 18, 1973. They have two grown sons, Scott Christian Pierce and Benjamin Curtis Pierce. Mark has ministered to the Salem Church of Christ in Salem, VA, the Forest Avenue Christian Church and the Woodlawn Christian Church of Knoxville, TN. He is currently pursuing his doctorate in experimental psychology at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. He is an avid hiker and gardener, and a "Bob Villa wannabe." He has served on several boards of directors for charitable and religious organizations.